

# WASHINGTON STATE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE TIER SYSTEM

A healthy, thriving downtown or neighborhood business district is an asset to any community that is endeavoring to sustain or grow its local economy and create or retain jobs. The Washington State Downtown Revitalization Program helps communities throughout the state revitalize the economy, appearance, and image of their traditional business districts using a range of services and assistance to meet the needs of communities interested in revitalization.

The DRP uses the successful Main Street™ methodology developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as its foundation for assistance. This approach emphasizes four critical areas of revitalization: **organization** helps everyone work towards the same goals and maximizes involvement of public and private leaders within the community; **promotion** brings people back downtown by helping to attract visitors, shoppers, and investors; **design** enhances a district's appearance and pedestrian amenities while preserving its historic features; and **economic restructuring** stimulates business development and helps strengthen the district's economic base.

Services are offered through a tiered system. If your community is just beginning to explore downtown revitalization, does not wish to become a Start-Up or designated Main Street community, or wishes to use the Main Street Approach™ in a non-traditional commercial setting, there is the "Downtown Affiliate" level. For communities that are exploring the possibility of future Main Street designation, there is the "Start-Up" level. And, for communities that have a population less than 100,000, or for neighborhood commercial districts, with a high degree of commitment and readiness towards using the Main Street Approach in a traditional downtown setting, there is the "Main Street" designation level.

The Downtown Revitalization Program also serves as a general clearinghouse for the latest tools and techniques in downtown development. General information, primary and secondary research, project development assistance information, and audio-visual and resource materials are available from the program to individuals and organizations interested in downtown revitalization.

For additional information, please contact us at:

**Washington State Downtown Revitalization Program**  
Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development  
128 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW, PO Box 42525  
Olympia, Washington 98504-2525  
360-725-4056, [susank@cted.wa.gov](mailto:susank@cted.wa.gov)  
[www.downtown.wa.gov](http://www.downtown.wa.gov)

# DOWNTOWN AFFILIATE COMMUNITIES

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The Downtown Affiliate option provides a range of services and assistance to meet a variety of community commitment and readiness levels. It is for communities that are just starting a downtown revitalization effort, those that do not wish to become a designated Main Street community, or those that wish to apply the Main Street Approach™ in a non-traditional commercial setting.

## ***How to Apply***

Communities may become a Downtown Affiliate at any time by completing a brief application.

A core feature of the service to Downtown Affiliates is access to training by state and national downtown development experts at a discounted rate. Downtown Affiliates will have the opportunity to learn about best practices in the field and to network with peers from around the state.

DOWNTOWN AFFILIATE COMMUNITIES	
Requirements	
<b>Have a broad-based revitalization organization</b>	The organization does not have to be an independent nonprofit and may include Chambers of Commerce, local governments, commercial neighborhood district organizations, merchant groups, etc.
<b>Attend trainings</b>	Representatives must attend at least one DRP training per year to remain active as a Downtown Affiliate.
<b>Take time to Learn About the Main Street Approach™</b>	This is the foundation of all DRP assistance.
Services	
<b>Workshops and Conferences</b>	DRP sponsored training by state and national experts on key downtown development topics provided at a discounted rate.
<b>Local Visits</b>	State staff available as resources permit to do a “walk about” visit and provide downtown revitalization input to local organization.
<b>Telephone Consultation</b>	State staff available for phone consultations.
<b>Newsletter</b>	The “Downtown Dispatch” newsletter helps keep a community abreast of the latest downtown news, tools, and techniques. (As resources allow.)
<b>Downtown Resource Lending Library</b>	Books, publications, videos, slides, and more are available for checkout. Samples and examples of downtown activities and projects on a variety of subjects are also available.
<b>Eligibility for Award Program</b>	Downtown Affiliates are eligible to submit nominations for the annual “Excellence in Downtown Revitalization Awards” program.

# START- UP COMMUNITIES

Communities that are exploring the possibility of future Main Street designation are encouraged to participate first as a Start-Up Community. Start-Up services help communities build an appropriate organizational and funding base for a comprehensive downtown or neighborhood commercial district revitalization program, as well as help prepare them for the Main Street application process. Participation as a Start-Up Community does not guarantee selection as a designated Main Street community, but it can help communities strengthen their revitalization efforts.

## ***How to Apply***

Communities should initially send a “letter of interest” to the DRP. Communities submitting letters will be invited to apply when resources permit. Intake at this level is on a space available basis.

<b>Requirements</b>	
<b>Work in a traditional Main Street district</b>	Main Street districts must be a physical setting conducive to applying the Main Street Approach™, including a sufficient mass of buildings and businesses within a compact pedestrian-oriented core area.
<b>Use of the Main Street Approach™</b>	This is a requirement of initial and on-going participation.
<b>Form a downtown or neighborhood commercial district revitalization organization</b>	Start-Ups must be willing to form a separate, nonprofit organization with the sole mission of revitalizing the downtown or neighborhood commercial district and serving as an advocate for the “heart and soul” of the community. While not the preferred structure, in communities with populations under 3,500, the DRP may consider applications where the downtown program is a branch of another organization such as an EDC, Chamber of Commerce, or local preservation organization providing certain conditions are met. Call the DRP office for details.
<b>Develop sustainable funding</b>	Start-Ups must be willing to work towards developing sustainable program funding.
<b>Employ an executive director</b>	Start-Ups are not expected to employ staff, but must be working towards it.
<b>Sign a Letter of Agreement</b>	Local commitment and support in working towards future Main Street designation is integral to a Start-Up program. See “Main Street Community Designation” section below. Communities accepted at the Start-Up level of the Tier System will be asked to sign a letter of agreement with the DRP indicating responsibilities of each.

In addition to these requirements, Start-Up communities must meet on-going administrative requirements; regular attendance at DRP trainings; and progress in addressing staff recommendations.

Communities should expect to work as a Start-Up for one to two years. Communities must actively participate and build organizational readiness to remain a Start-Up Program. If a community does not reach readiness to proceed to the next level of services within two years, they will be asked to step down. Communities may re-apply for participation at this level as appropriate.

## START-UP COMMUNITIES

### Services

<b>Application Visit/Community Presentation</b>	A preliminary assessment of the community's readiness to proceed will be performed along with presenting the Main Street Approach™ slide show at a community meeting. (On-site, pre-selection)
<b>Organizational Visit (Yr 1 &amp; 2)</b>	Year-one visit to include start-up checklist discussion and fundraising options. Year-two visit to identify progress and roadblocks, and provide suggestions for moving forward (On-site)
<b>Work Plan Assistance (Yr 1 &amp; 2)</b>	Year-one visit to include a facilitated workplan session for a start-up program. Year-two will be a workplan update session. (On-site)
<b>Agency Partnership Visit (Yr 2)</b>	A visit coordinated through the state program to put the community in touch with a staff person from a specific government program to help deal with a priority issue. (On-site)
<b>Regional Board Training</b>	As needed training by state staff and experienced board members.
<b>Scholarships</b>	Scholarships available to the Annual Downtown Revitalization Training Institute (certain conditions apply).
<b>New Manager Orientation</b>	Orientation and training is available for new downtown managers. (Olympia)
<b>Main Street Network Meetings</b>	Regular training by state and national experts is provided. Once a community has hired a downtown manager and manager orientation has been completed, the board and manager are invited to attend.
<b>Workshops and Conferences</b>	DRP sponsored training by state and national experts on key downtown development topics is provided at a discounted rate.
<b>Telephone Consultations</b>	State staff available for phone consultations.
<b>Newsletter</b>	The "Downtown Dispatch" newsletter helps keep a community abreast of the latest downtown news, tools, and techniques (as resources allow).
<b>Downtown Resource Lending Library</b>	Books, publications, videos, slides, and more are available for checkout. Extensive "sample and example" files are also available.
<b>Award Program Eligibility</b>	Start-Up communities are eligible to submit nominations to the annual "Excellence in Downtown Revitalization Awards" program.

# MAIN STREET™ COMMUNITIES

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The Washington State Downtown Revitalization Program provides a full-range of assistance to designated Main Street communities, from intensive services to meet the needs of new Main Street communities to services that help mature programs maintain focus and effectiveness. Designated Main Street programs work to develop the critical tools needed to undertake comprehensive downtown revitalization, such as design and economic incentives, market driven promotions, and business retention and recruitment programs.

## ***How to Apply***

Application rounds will be held as resources permit. Communities that are exploring the possibilities of future Main Street designation are encouraged to participate as a Start-Up community first.

## **Eligibility Criteria**

Towns, cities, and traditional neighborhood commercial districts must meet certain requirements to be eligible to apply for Main Street Community designation:

1. Have a population of no more than 100,000 based on the 2000 Census (cities and towns only). Neighborhood commercial districts should call the DRP office for specifics.
2. The proposed district should follow that of a “traditional Main Street district”. It should have a pedestrian scale and orientation. It should also have a sufficient mass of businesses, buildings, and density to be effective; i.e., the area should be one that has possibilities for demonstrable change as a result of participation. Communities interested in Main Street designation may request that DRP staff review a potential district for its appropriateness.

## **Things to Keep in Mind**

1. **Organizational Structure.** Experience has shown that a Main Street program functions most successfully as an independent nonprofit organization. This means, if your community is interested in Main Street designation, you should plan to form an independent nonprofit organization.
  - The DRP may consider an application in which the downtown manager is a city employee providing certain conditions are met. Call the DRP office for details.
  - While not the preferred structure, in communities with populations under 3,500, the DRP may consider an application where the downtown program is a branch of another organization such as an EDC, Chamber of Commerce, or local preservation organization providing certain conditions are met. Call the DRP office for details.
2. **Financial Commitment.** The DRP looks at an initial minimum funding period of four years to correspond with the intensive services offered to newly designated Main Street communities. Applications that show proof of a well-balanced and stable financial commitment from both the public and private sectors will be ranked higher. An adequate budget is required to maintain Main Street designation and to receive on-going services.

## Designation Requirements

Communities selected to partner with the Washington State Downtown Revitalization Program as a designated Main Street Community must meet and maintain the following criteria.

<b>MAIN STREET COMMUNITY REQUIREMENTS</b>	
<b>Work in a “traditional Main Street district”</b>	Main Street districts must be a physical setting conducive to applying the Main Street Approach™, including a sufficient mass of buildings and businesses within a compact pedestrian-oriented core area.
<b>Use the Main Street Approach™</b>	Main Street provides a proven and comprehensive approach specifically designed to address the issues and opportunities of traditional downtown commercial districts. Following the Main Street Approach™ is a requirement of initial and on-going participation.
<b>Have a downtown organization in place</b>	The downtown constituency is unique and has not been adequately served by traditional economic and business development groups. A separate, independent nonprofit organization with the sole mission of revitalizing downtown and serving as an advocate for the “heart and soul” of the community has been found to be the most successful way to reverse decline and foster progress. For communities under 3,500, see note under “Organizational Structure” , page 5.
<b>Have sustainable program funding</b>	Financial stability is crucial to staying mission-focused. Besides covering salaries, downtown organizations must provide funding to cover rent, utilities, travel, training, and an active program of work. Budgets will vary by community, but there are basic threshold numbers available from the DRP.
<b>Employ an executive director</b>	Paid professional staff to manage and coordinate the revitalization effort is critical. Communities with populations over 3,500 need full-time management to be effective. Communities with populations under 3,500 may hire a part-time program manager (minimum of 25 hours per week) though success with part-time assistance will be more limited.
<b>Sign a Letter of Agreement</b>	Local commitment and support is critical to Main Street success. Designated communities must sign a Letter of Agreement with the DRP indicating responsibilities of each.

In addition to these requirements, designated Main Street communities must meet on-going administrative requirements, including developing a comprehensive workplan; regular attendance at DRP trainings; submitting quarterly reports including economic development statistics; progress in addressing staff recommendations; progress in meeting the core competencies check-list; and, maintaining a National Main Street Network membership.

## Newly Designated Main Street Communities

The Washington State Downtown Revitalization Program provides the most intensive assistance in the first three to four years of program designation. Special assistance is provided in the first year to help the community assess issues facing downtown, map out a general strategy for revitalization, and train the community with tools and techniques needed to succeed.

## NEWLY DESIGNATED MAIN STREET COMMUNITY

Provided years 1 – 4

### First Year Services and Technical Assistance

Services are listed in the general order in which they are provided

<b>Application Visit</b>	A preliminary assessment of the community's readiness to proceed will be performed. (On-site, pre-selection)
<b>Organizational Visit / Main Street 101 Training</b>	State staff assists with organizational issues including roles and responsibilities of staff and board. They also help train the local program in the Main Street Approach™. (On-site)
<b>Work Plan Assistance</b>	State staff helps the local program develop a basic foundational work plan based on local community needs and desires, along with using the core competencies checklist. (On-site)
<b>Resource Team Visit</b>	A team of experts in the four points of Main Street™ is assembled to objectively assess the downtown area and the progress of the local program and make recommendations. (On-site, year-one or year-two on an "as needed basis". Not all communities will need this service)
<b>Year-End Assessment</b>	State staff assesses the progress of the organization (On-site)
<b>Main Street™ Certification</b>	State staff do a check of qualifying criteria for Main Street™ certification.
<b>National Main Street Center Network Membership</b>	Benefits include subscription to newsletter, discount for publications and conference, a members-only website, and a hot line. (First year only).

### Second through Fourth Year Services and Technical Assistance

<b>Agency Partnership Visit</b>	A visit coordinated through the state program to put the community in touch with a staff person from a specific government program to help deal with a priority issue. (On-site)
<b>Specialist Visits</b>	One-day visits by state staff and/or downtown development specialists to help communities address specific issues. (Available as resources allow. On-site)
<b>Work Plan Assistance</b>	State staff helps the local program develop and maintain a comprehensive workplan. (On-site)
<b>Year-End Assessment</b>	State staff assess the progress of the organization (On-site, will be performed every two to three years as resources allow.)
<b>Main Street™ Certification</b>	State staff check qualifying criteria for Main Street™ certification.

### Program Support and Professional Development

<b>New Manager Orientation</b>	Orientation and training is available for new downtown managers. (Olympia)
<b>Main Street Network Meetings</b>	Regular training by state and national experts is provided. <b>Managers must attend.</b> Board members are encouraged to attend.
<b>Regional Board Training</b>	As needed training by state staff and experienced board members.
<b>Scholarships</b>	Scholarships to the National Town Meeting on Main Street conference and the Downtown Revitalization Training Institute are provided (certain conditions apply).
<b>Workshops and Conferences</b>	DRP sponsored training by state and national experts on key downtown development topics provided at a discounted rate. <b>Attendance is required.</b>
<b>Telephone Consultations</b>	State staff available for phone consultations.
<b>Newsletter</b>	The "Downtown Dispatch" newsletter helps keep a community abreast of the latest downtown news, tools, and techniques.
<b>Downtown Resource Lending Library</b>	Books, publications, videos, slides, and more are available for checkout. Samples and examples of downtown activities and projects on a variety of subjects are also available.

<b>Marketing</b>	
<b>Public Relations</b>	Press coverage and exposure is provided through various media releases and marketing materials.
<b>Award Program Eligibility</b>	Newly Designated Main Street™ communities are eligible to submit nominations for the annual “Excellence in Downtown Revitalization Awards” program.

## Mature Main Street Communities

Restored facades, lower vacancy rates, and new streetscapes are not signs that revitalization is finished. It means that Main Street programs are entering a management or mature phase. Designated communities in good standing are considered mature programs after their first four years of designation. The DRP provides on-going services to assist mature communities in maintaining long-term effectiveness and progress.

<b>MATURE MAIN STREET COMMUNITY SERVICES</b> Provided years 5 and beyond	
<b>Specialist Services and Technical Assistance</b>	
<b>Specialist Visits</b>	State staff and specialists available on request as resources allow.
<b>Work Plan Assistance</b>	State staff available on request as resources allow to help the local program maintain a comprehensive workplan. (On-site)
<b>Year-End Assessment</b>	State staff assess progress of the organization. (As needed. On-site)
<b>Main Street™ Certification</b>	State staff do a check of qualifying criteria for Main Street™ certification.
<b>Program Support and Professional Development</b>	
<b>Main Street Network Meetings</b>	Regular training by state and national experts is provided. <b>Managers must attend.</b> Board members are encouraged to attend.
<b>Regional Board Training</b>	As needed training by state staff and experienced board members.
<b>New Manager Orientation</b>	Orientation and training is available for new downtown managers. (Olympia)
<b>Scholarships</b>	Scholarships to the National Town Meeting on Main Street conference and the Downtown Revitalization Training Institute are provided (certain conditions apply).
<b>Workshops and Conferences</b>	DRP sponsored training by state and national experts on key downtown development topics provided at a discounted rate. <b>Attendance is required.</b>
<b>Telephone Consultations</b>	State staff available for phone consultations.
<b>Newsletter</b>	The “Downtown Dispatch” newsletter helps keep a community abreast of the latest downtown news, tools, and techniques.
<b>Downtown Resource Lending Library</b>	Books, publications, videos, slides, and more are available for checkout. Samples and examples of downtown activities and projects on a variety of subjects are also available.



<b>Marketing</b>	
<b>Public Relations</b>	Press coverage and exposure is provided through various media releases and marketing materials.
<b>Award Program Eligibility</b>	Mature Main Street™ communities are eligible to submit nominations for the annual “Excellence in Downtown Revitalization Awards” program.